DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 199 TE 001 877

AUTHOR Prior, Kathleen W.
TITLE Guide for Teaching the Novel "Island of the Blue Dolphins," Grade 6.
INSTITUTION San Diego City Schools, Calif.
PUB DATE 66
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.20
DESCRIPTORS Characterization (Literature), Content Analysis, Critical Reading, *Grade 6, *Literary Analysis, Literary Conventions, *Literature Appreciation, *Novels, *Teaching Guides, Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Island of the Blue Dolphins

ABSTRACT

As a guide for in-depth study of "Island of the Blue Dolphins" by sixth-graders who have completed the basal reader, this document focuses on ways of enabling each child to find satisfaction and enjoyment in the novel; to develop a greater interest in literature; to gain an understanding of plot development in a story; to realize what the mood, setting, and background contribute to the novel; to become aware of the ways in which an author develops characterization in a story; and to appreciate the specific writing techniques of an author. Material is organized under seven units for group discussions--the first, an introduction to the book; the next five, discussions of groups of chapters as they are read; and the last, an appraisal of the novel as a whole. Specific questions and discussion guidelines are provided for each meeting as well as suggestions for factors to be considered while reading the next chapters. (JM)

ED040199

Stock No. 41-1-9000
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
CURRICULUM SERVICES DIVISION
INSTRUCTIONAL SUGGESTIONS BULLETIN

GUIDE FOR TEACHING THE NOVEL ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS GRADE 6

Prepared by
Kathleen W. Prior

Advisory Committee - Robert A. Bennett, Chairman
Ramona Y. Christopher, Paul E. Nielsen

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Expected Outcomes	1
Introduction of the Novel and Motivation of the Experience	2
Discussion of Chapters 1 through 4 (pages 1-24)	4
Discussion of Chapters 5 through 10 (pages 25-68)	7
Discussion of Chapters 11 through 16 (pages 69-104)	11
Discussion of Chapters 17 through 22 (pages 105-46)	14
Discussion of Chapters 23 through 29 (pages 147-84)	17
Discussion of the Novel as a Whole	20

EDO 40199

RAB/9-65
Reprinted 1966

INTRODUCTION

Island of the Blue Dolphins has been selected for experimental use with sixth-grade groups who have completed at least the basal reader for that grade. Children in such groups are probably already avid readers, but their enjoyment of books may be confined to following the sequential development of events. For this reason, the use of a single novel with an entire reading group is designed to provide the opportunity to study a novel in depth and to develop new and deeper appreciations of literature. Even for those children who may have already read this book, this type of study has much value, for they will be examining new ideas and aspects and will find their enjoyment of the novel even greater than before.

Since this type of extensive study of one piece of literature may be a new one for both the children and the teacher, this guide is provided to suggest topics of discussion and ways of making the experience a rich and rewarding one. The length of time spent studying the novel will vary from group to group but will probably require a period of approximately two weeks.

In spending an extended period on one novel, care must be taken to achieve a balance between not belaboring details to the point of detracting from the enjoyment of the book and at the same time developing new insights into literature and the skills of writing which the author employs. The teacher's interest and enthusiasm are key factors in determining the success of this study. It is hoped that this guide will help the teacher who has not previously had the opportunity to teach close reading of literature to direct the study of this novel. The guide can be used as a "work copy" by the teacher in preparation for the circle meetings, since it does not need to be returned with the set of books.

During this study, the teacher will continue meeting with the group on a regular basis, just as during periods of basic reading instruction. Seven such circle meetings with the teacher are suggested in this guide--one to motivate the experience with the children, five to discuss the novel as it is read, and one to discuss the novel as a whole. The following division for Island of the Blue Dolphins is suggested as the basis for reading assignments and circle discussions:

First meeting: Introduction of the Novel and Motivation of the Experience
Second meeting: Discussion of Chapters 1 through 4 (pages 1-24)
Third meeting: Discussion of Chapters 5 through 10 (pages 25-68)
Fourth meeting: Discussion of Chapters 11 through 16 (pages 69-104)
Fifth meeting: Discussion of Chapters 17 through 22 (pages 105-46)
Sixth meeting: Discussion of Chapters 23 through 29 (pages 147-84)
Seventh meeting: Discussion of the Novel as a Whole

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Little, if any, written work should be required of the student during this study. Rather, emphasis should be placed on guidance and discussion which will both heighten his enjoyment of fine literature and also aid him in understanding and appreciating those factors which make a piece of writing

outstanding. It is hoped that the experiences of this study will enable each child to:

1. Find satisfaction and enjoyment in the novel being studied.
2. Develop a greater interest in literature.
3. Gain an understanding of plot development in a story.
4. Understand the contributions made to a novel by mood, setting, and background.
5. Develop an awareness of the different means an author employs to develop characterization in a story.
6. Appreciate specific writing techniques of an author, such as his choice of words, use of figurative language and foreshadowing events to follow.

FIRST CIRCLE MEETING

Introduction of the Novel and Motivation of the Experience

The teacher might begin this study by asking the children to name some of the good books which they have read, telling why those books were especially enjoyable to them. The group can then draw generalizations from these examples as to qualities of a good novel, including the fact that it is not just the story itself which makes a book outstanding but even more important it is the skill of the author in setting forth that story in such a manner that the story becomes truly alive for the reader. There are many meanings in a novel which we might miss if we were to read it rapidly or just to follow the plot development. For this reason, we need to accept the challenge of discovering the many treasures an author has included in his book.

Children can then be asked where they think authors get their story ideas. Responses will probably include the following: from their imaginations, from personal experiences, from historical events, and possibly from legends or tales which they have heard. At this point the teacher should tell the children that they are going to have a new experience--that of reading and studying a full-length novel together--and that the book they will be using was written in this last way--from a story that the author had heard and which interested him so much that he developed it into a book.

Introducing Island of the Blue Dolphins

The teacher can show the group a copy of Island of the Blue Dolphins, encouraging the children to see what clues the cover of the book supplies as to the type of story which they can expect and its setting. From the title, they can speculate as to where an island of blue dolphins might be located. (Where are dolphins found?) The teacher can then explain that the island called the "Island of the Blue Dolphins" in the book is really very close to

San Diego. It is now called the Island of San Nicolas, however, and is little more than a harsh rock looming off the California coast. It can be located on most California maps about seventy-five miles southwest of Los Angeles and is one of the eight Channel Islands.

Children should be asked whether the cover gives them clues as to when the story takes place. (The picture of the girl should help them realize it is not a present-day story.) Then, drawing inferences from the picture and from their knowledge of California history, they can assume it likely that the girl is one of the early California Indians. (The teacher can supply additional historical information from the Author's Note found on pages 182-84 in the book.)

The children should find the author's name, Scott O'Dell, and be asked if they know anything about this man. (They may know that he is a local author from Julian and also that he received the Newberry Award* for the year 1961 for this book.) The teacher can explain that Mr. O'Dell has based his book on the story of an Indian girl who, according to history, actually lived on the bleak Island of San Nicolas--the "Island of the Blue Dolphins"--during the 1800's.

Setting Purposes for Reading

Care should be taken in setting the purposes for reading the book so all children will realize that they will be doing more than just reading a good story. (Some boys and girls will have previously read this book. They should be enlisted to help supply background information but cautioned against revealing what happens in the story. They should be told that they will enjoy the book even more in re-reading it and that they will be examining new aspects of it as they read.)

The following are purposes which can be discussed with the children:

1. To enjoy a good novel.
2. To observe and appreciate an author's skill in writing.
3. To see how fact and fiction are blended in a book.
4. To infer meanings behind literal facts intended by the author.
5. To develop the habit of thinking ahead in a story--to ask the question, "What might happen next?"
6. To determine what qualities in Island of the Blue Dolphins made it a Newberry Award book.

*The Newberry Medal is an annual award to the book which the American Library Association judges the best piece of juvenile literature published during that year. This award was first given in 1922 and is named in honor of John Newberry, an English bookseller who lived in the 1700's and was interested in improving literature for boys and girls.

To Think About While Reading Chapters 1 through 4

The group will get more from each reading assignment if the teacher supplies some points for children to think about and to be prepared to discuss at the following circle meeting. Some of these questions might be placed on the board for reference during the reading of the assignment. Written answers should not be required, however.

Questions to think about while reading Chapters 1 through 4 are as follows:

1. Why do you think Mr. O'Dell begins his book as he does? Be able to describe this beginning.

2. How does he use the first chapter to reveal the setting? . . . the characters? . . . the style of writing which will be used in the book?

3. What do we learn in these chapters about the Indian girl and her people?

4. Where do we find the hints in Chapter 2 which reveal that something is going to happen?

SECOND CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of Chapters 1 through 4 (pages 1-24)

In the first four chapters of Island of the Blue Dolphins, the children will have been introduced to the setting of the story and will have become acquainted with the Indian girl Karana and her brother Ramo. Much information will also have been supplied about the way of life of the Indians on this island. Because they pave the way for what will come later in the book, the events in these chapters (especially the coming of the Aleut hunters and later their killing of most of the men of the Ghalas-at tribe) are important. This opening section also reveals much concerning the author's style and the way the book is written.

The following discussion topics can be used after the reading of these chapters:

1. The Opening

Children should discuss the importance of a good opening in a book as a means of capturing reader interest. What question is brought to the mind of the reader with the first sentence of this novel: "I remember the day the Aleut ship came to our island"? (Why should this particular event be so significant as to stand out in the mind of the storyteller?) The contents of the first four chapters should also enable the students to see why the author opened the book with the coming of the Aleut ship. (Because this was an event which was to change the lives of the Indians and help mold the story to follow.)

What does the opening reveal about the style in which the story will be told? (The story will be a first-person account.) Children can be asked to name other books or stories written in the first person, as if someone were

telling his own story. (Black Beauty is one with which they should be familiar.) How does this style differ from most stories which are written in the third-person style in which a story is being told about others? (The main idea here is for the group to realize that in a first-person account the author must tell everything from the viewpoint of the person who is the "I" in the story.)

2. Setting of the Story

A skillful author has many ways of revealing when and where a story takes place without telling the reader directly. Find examples in the opening of the book where such clues are given the observant reader. (Some examples: children gathering roots to use for food; talking of Ramo's age in terms of "so many suns and moons"; use of a pointed stick as a digging instrument; the fact that neither child had ever seen a ship; the type of ship; reference to the coast of Santa Barbara twenty leagues away.)

3. Characterization

Karana: Since this story is a first person account, the author cannot tell us what kind of girl Karana is. Have children discuss other ways he uses to help us know her (what she tells us about herself, what she thinks, how she acts, what she says to other people), and illustrate with examples from this section. (She tells us her age directly on page 1, for example, but children may need assistance to see that such things as her thoughts upon seeing the Aleut ship, her concern for the otter, and her continuing to dig roots until her basket was filled even after her brother had run off in excitement, all help us know her better.)

Ramo: Karana tells us all we know about Ramo. How does she characterize him both through her description of him and the way she talks to him on pages 3 and 4? Re-examine this conversation to see if it typifies a brother-sister relationship of today. In spite of Karana's description of Ramo as "foolish as a cricket" and her apparent disgust when he ran off upon spotting the ship, what insight does the author give us about Karana's true feeling toward her brother?

4. Figurative Language

Authors make their writing more vivid through the use of figurative language such as similes, metaphors, and personification. There are excellent examples of figurative language in this section which can help children appreciate the effectiveness of this writing technique.

Have them find the description of the Aleut on page 14 ("small black eyes like pebbles and a mouth like the edge of a stone knife") and think how this same description might have been given without using the similes. Which gives a better mental picture? Why are these particular similes especially appropriate for this story?

Next have the children go back to the opening paragraph to note the figures of speech presented and the difference between the simile, a comparison depending on "like" or "as," and the direct comparison of the metaphor:

"At first it seemed like a small shell afloat on the sea." (Simile)

"Then it grew larger and was a gull with folded wings." (Metaphor) Have the group find the metaphor in Ramo's description of the sea on page 2 and note how this helps us know he is inclined toward imaginative thinking. (Karana's comments, on the other hand, help us classify her as the practical, down-to-earth type.)

Have children examine the effect of O'Dell's use of double comparisons in his figurative language in this statement from page 1: "Ramo was quick as a cricket. Also foolish as a cricket when he was excited." Then examine the triple reference to the eyes of a lizard in Paragraph 1, page 2. Why do these repeated comparisons with the same thing heighten the effectiveness of the figure for the reader?

5. Background Information

Often an author needs to supply background information in order to help the reader picture the setting or understand why something happens or may happen. Children should be helped to discover these spots and to appreciate the skill with which the author weaves such needed facts into the story.

Have children examine these chapters to see the various ways in which information is given about the island itself. An indirect approach on page 4, Paragraphs 1 and 2, gives the reader much knowledge about the features of the island without interrupting the progression of events. Children should be encouraged to see how much they can learn about the island from just these two paragraphs. A more direct approach is found on page 9, Paragraph 2, where Karana interrupts her narrative to say, "Perhaps I should tell you about our island so you will know how it looks and where our village was and where the Aleuts camped for most of the summer." (Note how she justifies inserting this description by the second part of her statement.) As children look at the description which follows, they should remember again that this is given through Karana's own eyes. They might then think how they would give a description of their own neighborhood or city to someone who had never been there. Have them compare the dominant impression a reader would get from their description with the impression they got from Karana's description.

Have children find other examples in which they are supplied background, either directly or indirectly, in this section of the book and tell why it is important to include such information. (Examples might be the tribal customs on page 5 and the past tribal history on page 6.)

6. Foreshadowing

Children will appreciate an author's skill more if they learn to recognize those clues which he supplies to hint at coming events. This literary device is called "foreshadowing." The following discussion will help illustrate this.

Have the group trace the mounting tension between the Aleuts and Indians on the island, citing examples of each group's knowing the activities of the other. Have them discuss why the Indians considered it "good fortune" to find the stranded school of bass in Chapter 2; then have them relate this to the statement at the end of this chapter (page 14): "But little did we know. . .that our good fortune would soon bring trouble to Ghalas-at." This

gives us the feeling that something is going to happen and is an example of "foreshadowing."

Encourage the children to speculate how the story might have been different if this "good fortune" had not fallen on the Indians, or if they had shared their find with the Aleuts.

Chapter 4 starts with a description of the day which the Aleuts chose for their departure. How did this sunless, stormy day contribute to the atmosphere needed for the terrible events which followed? Would the effect have been the same if the weather had been different?

To Think About While Reading Chapters 5 Through 10

1. How did the Aleut treachery affect the people of Ghalas-at--particularly Karana and Ramo?

2. What are the different moods reflected in these chapters? How can we explain the cause of each mood and how does the author use his writing skill to heighten each?

3. Where do we find examples of humor in these chapters?

4. What character traits and changes in Karana and Ramo are indicated? Why do these changes seem to occur?

THIRD CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of Chapters 5 through 10 (Pages 25-68)

Much action is reflected in these chapters. First we observe the despondency of the remaining members of the tribe, their readjustment in work assignments, and Kimki's departure from the island to seek aid. Next the white man's ship comes to the island to take the tribe to shore and Karana jumps from the departing ship when she discovers Ramo has been left behind. Briefly we watch the relationship of the two siblings before Ramo is killed by the pack of wild dogs. This event leaves Karana the sole human inhabitant of the "Island of Blue Dolphins," and we observe her initial loneliness and later unsuccessful attempt to leave the island by canoe.

These topics can be used by the group for discussing this section at the circle:

1. Mood

O'Dell uses a variety of moods in setting forth the events in these chapters and children should be encouraged to note the predominant mood in each chapter, to tell what caused the mood, and to give examples of how the author makes us feel it in each case. Examples from each chapter are

given below:

Chapter 5: Mood--despondency, unrestfulness.

"That night was the most terrible time in all the memory of Ghalas-at." (25)

"People went out only to gather food and came back to eat in silence." (25)

"Life in the village should have been peaceful, but it was not." (26)

"A sort of sickness came over the village and people sat and did not speak, nor even laugh." (28)

Chapter 6: Have children contrast the moods found at the beginning and end of this chapter, as represented by these two statements:

1. ". . . but now everything seemed to cause alarm." (page 30)

2. "We were fearful of where we were going, yet we were happy, too." (page 34)

Chapter 7: Mood--excitement.

Have children find examples of ways the people showed this excitement in such activities as their preparations for leaving and in their conversation.

Chapter 8: Mood--happiness (companionship of Karana and Ramo).

Many examples of this feeling can be found. However, particular attention should be given to the conversation on page 43 in which Ramo says that he does not care if the ship never returns". . . because I like it here with you. . . . It is more fun than when the others were here."

Chapters 9 and 10: Mood--loneliness.

Good examples of this are on page 49--Karana's description of the deserted village--and page 60--her despair when she realizes the ship has not returned for her. The group should examine the effect of her loneliness on her decision to leave the island.

2. Humor

The humor in Island of the Blue Dolphins may not be easily recognized by the group, since it is more subtle than that to which they may be accustomed and it is inserted in brief passages. For this reason, pupils should be aided to discover the subtle humor of the following and helped to decide what brings about the humorous touch:

a. The taunting conversation between the lovers, Ulape and Nanko,

beginning at the bottom of page 35:

> "The ship leaves," shouted Nanko.
> "If it goes," Ulape shouted back, "it will come again after the storm."
> My sister was in love with Nanko, but she laughed at him.
> "Other men will come to the island," she said. "They will be far more handsome and brave than those who leave."
> "You are all women of such ugliness that they will be afraid and soon go away."

b. Karana's threat to administer the rites of manhood to Ramo before he could become the new chief (page 44): "As is the custom, therefore, I will have to whip you with a switch of nettles and then tie you to a red-ant hill."

c. The humor caused by the contrast in Ramo's slight appearance with his attitude of bravado: "I watched him stride off to get the spear, a little boy with thin arms and legs like sticks, wearing a big string of sea-elephant teeth."

d. The humor of the ridiculously long name chosen by Ramo when he declared himself the new chief--Chief Tanyositlopai.

3. Characterization

Children should continue to trace O'Dell's development of the major characters through examining both their thoughts and actions.

Karana: What do we learn about Karana by the objects she chooses to take with her in Chapter 6 (page 32) and again in Chapter 7 (page 35)? What does she reveal both about herself and her sister Ulape when she tells us, "Ulape had two boxes of earrings, for she was vainer than I"? In Chapter 7 how can we reconcile her deep concern over her brother when she could not find him on the ship with her insistent thoughts of how she would punish him as she struggled to shore? When she reached shore, why was the only thing that made her angry the fact that she had ruined her beautiful skirt of yucca fibers?

In Chapter 8, does she still seem to think that her brother is "foolish as a cricket" as she did in the beginning of the book, or are there examples which can be cited to show that she has become less protective? Was it "in character" for her to forget about looking for spearheads when she found the wealth of bracelets, strings of beads, and earrings in the Aleut chest (page 52), to put on the prettiest of these and then to walk down the shore, admiring herself and feeling "like the bride of a chief"? If this was a natural action and feeling for a girl, why then did she fling all of these treasures into the deep water of the sea?

Ramo: Did it seem logical to us for Ramo to run back to Ghalas-at to get his spear, even after he had been told not to do so?. . .for Karana to look for him on board ship because she knew he was curious and therefore would be in the way of the sailors? To the reader, does Ramo still seem as imprudent as in Chapter 1? If not, what are the signs of growing maturity?

4. Appreciation of an Author's Use of Language

Children need to realize that an author uses great care in choosing the language for his story.

Have the group find the first reference to the pack of wild dogs (page 27) which will figure so prominently throughout the book. Then have them turn to pages 41 and 42 to examine the passage beginning "The huts looked like ghosts in the cold light." Have them pick out some of the powerful verbs which the author has used so effectively in presenting a picture of the pack of dogs as an ominous presence. The following are examples:

". . . dozens of wild dogs scurrying around through the huts"

"They ran from us, snarling as they went"

"The pack must have slunk into the village soon after we left, for it had gorged itself upon the abalone . . ."

". . . they sat on the hill, barking and growling at each other."

Another good example of picturesque writing is Karana's description of Ghalas-at after Ramo's death. The following paragraph (page 49) should be examined by the group both for the purpose of analyzing her decision never to live in the village again and also to appreciate O'Dell's skill in creating a vivid word picture:

> It was a morning of thick fog and the sound of far-off waves breaking on the shore. I had never noticed before how silent the village was. Fog crept in and out of the empty huts. It made shapes as it drifted and they reminded me of all the people who were dead and those who were gone. The noise of the surf seemed to be their voices speaking.

Children should be encouraged to find other examples of especially effective writing and passages containing strong sensory impressions. Some excellent ones related to the wind and sea as the tribe prepared to leave the island are found on pages 36 and 37.

5. Significant Sentences

Some sentences in a novel have special significance to the story which may be overlooked by young readers. Other sentences may contain unfamiliar expressions which need clarification. See if children understand the following from this section of Island of the Blue Dolphins:

a. "Those who had died at Coral Cove were still with us." (27)

b. "After Kimki had been gone one moon . . ." (30)

c. "Now that he had become Chief of Ghalas-at, I would have even more trouble with him. . ." (44)

d. "Now my hopes were dead." (60)

e. "More than anything, it was the blue dolphins that took me back home." (67)

6. The Author's Use of Native Lore

Interest is added to Island of the Blue Dolphins through the author's inclusion of native superstitions and signs of good fortune. Have children find examples of these and discuss how they add to the story and influence what is happening. Examples of superstitions could be (1) that women of the tribe should not make weapons (page 53), and (2) that before starting a trip, a person should consult his ancestors (page 61). Karana felt two good omens as she headed her canoe toward her home island (on page 65): (1) there was no wind, and (2) she was joined by the swarm of dolphins.

To Think About While Reading Chapters 11 Through 16

1. What important change do we notice in Karana after she returns to the "Island of the Blue Dolphins"?

2. How did this change in attitude bring about a change in her activities?

3. In what ways did she make use of the natural environment in her new life?

4. How do the animals on and around the island contribute to the story development?

FOURTH CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of Chapters 11 through 16 (pages 69-104)

Even though Karana was faced with many tests of her courage and self-reliance in the previous section, her thoughts and activities were centered on self-preservation and hopes and attempts to leave the island. A significant change is reflected in Chapter 11 when she discovers, after her unsuccessful attempt to leave, that she no longer regards the island as her prison but rather her home. This is an important turning point which children need to understand, for it is Karana's new-found acceptance of her fate which helps transform a bleak existence into a satisfying and rewarding experience for her. Much of the discussion of this section should center on this change and the resulting change in her activities toward these designed to make her life more pleasant.

1. Noting Significant Changes in Attitude

An examination of the following section (pages 69 and 70) by the children should enable them to discuss the important change in Karana's attitude as set forth above:

> I felt as if I had been gone a long time as I stood there looking down from the high rock. I was happy to be home. Everything that I saw . . . filled me with happiness.

I was surprised that I felt this way, for it was only a short time ago that I had stood on this same rock and felt that I could not bear to live here another day.

. . . Now I know that I would never go again. The "Island of the Blue Dolphins" was my home; I had no other.

Ask the children to find examples in these chapters to illustrate Karana's new-found happiness and inner peace. (Note also that the section ends on page 104 by reiterating this dominant feeling with the simple, but forceful, statement "I was very happy.")

2. Noting Significant Changes in Activities

Have children contrast Karana's activities in the previous section with those in Chapters 11-16, noting how her change in attitude brought about a parallel change in activities. Discuss what things she did to make the island her home. Which activities were related to satisfying the basic needs of food and shelter? Which were designed to make her life more pleasant? Examine the priority which she gave each activity and discuss the reasoning she used in establishing this order. (For example, why did she decide that she needed to build a fence before starting her house?)

3. Characterization

Discuss the main character traits of Karana revealed by this section (courage, self-reliance, resourcefulness), giving examples of how each was illustrated.

4. Analyzing Karana's Use of Her Natural Environment

Examples of Karana's resourcefulness in supplying her needs and making the island her home will already have been mentioned in the preceding discussion. A more detailed exploration of this should be undertaken, however, since so much of this section is devoted to her dependence upon and utilization of the natural environment--both its topographical features and the natural materials at hand. Some of the following points may help with a further explanation of this idea.

Karana's first need was to build a house. What factors did she need to consider in finding the best location for it? (A place sheltered from the wind and close to a water supply.) There were three possible sites which met these requirements. What advantages and disadvantages did Karana feel each had and why did she choose the one she did? (See pages 71 and 72.)

Other questions to consider:

Where did she find the materials to build her fence? the house? (page 74)

How did the environment help her in building her house? (She could use natural rock formations for part of the walls.) How did it hinder her? (Lack of wood--page 75.)

From what sources did she obtain her food? From what materials did she make her cooking utensils? (page 76)

How did she fashion the tools she used? What difficulties did she encounter in supplying weapons? (page 76)

What procedure did she follow in building her canoe? (page 99)

5. The Author's Use of Language

Karana's need for a heavier spear led to her determination to kill a bull sea elephant and thus obtain his teeth, even though it usually took at least three men to accomplish this feat. While she is engaged in this endeavor, the reader is given a fascinating glimpse into the life and habits of the sea elephant. Have the children relate some of the interesting sea elephant lore found in Chapter 13, noticing how skillfully this information is woven into the action of the story. Also have them share some of the vivid word pictures and interesting figures of speech used by the author and locate some especially forceful verbs used in the account of the struggle between the old and young bull elephants.

6. Credibility in a Story

By the end of the first winter, Karana had supplied her basic needs and was ready to go to the cave of the wild dogs to rid herself of this menace. Children will recognize Karana's wounding of the leader of the pack, nursing him back to health, and ultimate companionship with him as one of the major events in this section. Because of the strong bond which developed between the two, Karana was no longer lonely.

At all times an author must make a happening a natural result of what has gone before and believable to the reader. Children should be encouraged to discuss the plausibility in two such staunch enemies becoming such close friends in terms of these questions:

What relationship has been established between Karana and the pack of wild dogs in previous parts of the story? In what ways has the leader been given character throughout the book? (See page 91.) How is he different from the other dogs in appearance and actions? Why has Karana been so determined to single out the leader of the dogs for her revenge? In view of this, why does Karana feel sympathy for the wounded dog (page 95) and nurse him back to health?

How does the author reveal a gradual transition from distrust between the two (represented by Karana's sleeping on the rock because of her fear of the dog and by the dog's snarling when she extended her hand toward him) to the happy companionship revealed in Chapter 16? Was this change believable to us? How was Rontu's domestication especially important to Karana? (She was no longer lonely.) Find examples in Chapter 16 to illustrate the friendly relationship existing between the two.

To Think About While Reading Chapters 17 Through 22

1. What passages and activities reflect the peacefulness which Karana has found on her island?

2. Which other moods are worked into this section and what events in the story cause each?

3. How does the return of the Aleut ship affect Karana's life?

FIFTH CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of Chapters 17 Through 22 (pages 105-46)

An author displays his artistry through the means he employs to achieve balance and variety in the story. There are many writing techniques which accomplish this, including: following an exciting passage by a restful one; interspersing conversation in narrative sections; varying the length of sentences from those which are long and involved to those which are short and to-the-point, according to the purpose the sentence is to accomplish; alternating descriptive sections with those of action; and appealing to different senses.

Children can be helped to understand this need to provide balance and variety in a novel with these chapters, especially from the standpoint of mood and atmosphere. Chapter 17 opens quietly as we observe the signs of spring on the island, but ends on a note of excitement as Rontu challenges the pack of wild dogs. Chapter 18 is serene throughout--with the emphasis on the island in the spring and Karana's girl-like activities of pleasure. After a quiet opening with a glimpse of the sea life, Chapter 19 switches to more excitement--the fight with the giant devilfish. An air of mystery is introduced in the following chapter with the visit to Black Cave. Next come the wariness and suspense brought about by the return of the Aleuts in Chapter 21, the happiness of Karana's friendship with the Aleut girl in Chapter 22, and finally, after the departure of the Aleuts, a return to the quiet atmosphere reflected in the beginning of the section.

Most of the discussion of this section will probably be based on these changing moods and the ways the author varies his style to reflect each.

1. Balance and Variety in Writing

Start the discussion by having children recall the succession of changing moods found in these chapters and consider how this use of variety and balance contributes to the effectiveness of the story. Follow this by taking each mood separately to see what means the author uses to develop it.

2. The Mood of Peacefulness

The "Island of the Blue Dolphins" seems to reflect the inner peace which Karana has found. She is pleased and happy with her island home and gives us many interesting views of it during this section which reflect this feeling of peacefulness. What are some of these examples? (Suggestions follow.)

On page 106 she referred to the first day of spring. How did she know it was the first day of spring, since she had no calendar? Karana tells us on page 105 that even though "the white man's ship did not return that spring, it was a happy time. The air smelled of flowers and birds sang everywhere." All of Chapter 18 seems to reflect this quiet, peaceful atmosphere. Locate some of the effective descriptive passages which help us share Karana's delight in the flowers and birds. What words and phrases appeal to our senses of sight, sound, touch, and smell?

Examine Karana's activities in this chapter to see how they contribute to the prevalent mood and differ from her work in other parts of the book. (Be sure to help children see that her present activities were designed for pleasure rather than survival and were mostly girl-like in nature. Include the taming of the two birds, noting the reasons she advanced for the names she gave each on page 114.) Does it seem typical for a girl to wish she had been called by another name? Notice also the type of clothing which she made for herself--a lovely skirt made of yucca fibers and sandals which she could wear "just to be dressed up when I wore my new skirt" (page 114). Why would Karana often put on her beautiful skirt and sandals, fashion a wreath of flowers for her hair, and walk along the cliff in her finery with Rontu when there was no one there to admire her?

Find passages in Chapter 19 presenting peaceful and interesting pictures of the natural life in and around the sea which Karana gives us as she gathers the abalone for her winter food. (These can include the starfish, dolphins, sea otters, gulls, and scallops.) Have children explain this statement from page 118: "Scallops fell on the reef like rain, which amused me, but not Rontu who could not understand what the gulls were doing."

3. <u>The Mood of Excitement</u>

What are the two events in this section which are filled with excitement for the reader? (Rontu's challenge of and fight with the wild dog pack; the encounter with the devilfish) In what ways does the author make us feel the excitement in each? (Have children support their answers by pointing out specific words and phrases which have been used.)

The fight with the wild dogs beginning on page 111 gives us additional insight into the characters of both Karana and Rontu. Why did Rontu feel compelled to challenge the remaining pack? What thoughts caused Karana to worry when she realized he had gone? (She thought he had left her to return to the pack.) Why couldn't Karana intrude in the fight, even though she was physically able to do so? Why did Rontu, after his victory over the other dogs, trot right past Karana to their house, where he waited for her "as if nothing had happened"?

Recall the hints (foreshadowing) we have been given throughout the book that a fight with the devilfish was probable. Find examples of the vivid description which the author supplies of this giant--both its appearance and actions. (See pages 118 through 123.) From the description given we can see why Karana and her people referred to the creature as a devilfish; however, it is familiar to us by another name. What is that? (The octopus.) What does it indicate when Karana compares the eyes of the devilfish with those

"of a spirit I had once seen on a night that rain fell and lightning forked in the sky"? (The superstitious beliefs of her people.)

4. The Mood of Mystery

Karana and Rontu went many places together during this time, "for now there was nothing left to do." While returning from Tall Rock, they discovered the cave where they were stranded overnight. Why did the girl decide, after this experience, to call it Black Cave and never to go there again? (See pages 127 through 129.) Find examples of ways this mood of mystery and eerie atmosphere were brought out. (Some might be: "Black shadows drifting over the walls"; "The sound echoed through the cave like the howling of a whole pack of dogs"; "The eyes glittered down at me, moved as the light on the water moved and was reflected upon them. They were more alive than the eyes of those who live.") Why did Karana feel not only that the skeleton was one of her ancestors but also that the other images fashioned from reeds and clothed in gull feathers were ancestors of hers, too?

5. Moods Resulting from the Return of the Aleuts

The return of the Aleut ship to the "Island of the Blue Dolphins" brings about a variety of moods which children should be helped to recognize. Some of the following points can be used to assist them in noting the suspense lest Karana be discovered, her wariness in approaching Tutok, the Aleut girl, and the eventual happy friendship between the two.

When Karana first sighted the ship on the distant water, she "wondered if it could be the white men, though now I thought about them little and seldom looked for them" (page 130). How does this give us further indication of her change in attitude?

What preparations did she make before the Aleuts reached shore? Considering the fact that she had been so long without human companionship, did it seem natural for her to hide from them?

Contrast the reactions of Karana and Tutok when they first came face to face and give reasons for the way each acted. How did Tutok make friendly approaches toward Karana? Why was Karana's behavior so defensive? What conflict was presented to Karana when the Aleut girl admired the beautiful skirt of cormorant feathers? (Her pride in the skirt made Karana feel compelled to show it, in spite of her need to be defensive. In this light, have children analyze the statement "I was so proud of the skirt that I did not think" page 138.)

What were other situations in which Karana was faced with inner conflict? (One might be her realization that it was good to hear spoken words, even though they were strange to her and spoken by an enemy. Another was her refusal to take the necklace left her by Tutok, at the same time admiring its beauty and wondering if it would make two loops around her neck.) Why was Tutok disappointed when she found Karana had not taken the necklace?

What was the turning point in the relationship of the two girls? (When Karana jumped from her hiding place to run after Tutok and call to her as

the Aleut girl was walking away.) What relationship existed between the two for the remainder of the time the Aleuts were on the island?

Explain why Karana was at first happy when the Aleuts had gone but then suddenly found that the island seemed very quiet. From Karana's reaction, predict how the novel will end.

To Think About While Reading Chapters 23 Through 29

1. In what ways did Karana feel the effects of the Aleuts' visit to the island, even after they had departed?

2. How are additions and changes made in her family and how do these influence her feelings toward all animal life?

3. Where does the author indicate the passing of time and years to the reader?

4. What mixed emotions does Karana have when the white man's ship finally reappears?

5. Why does the author end the story as he does? Be able to discuss the effect of this ending.

SIXTH CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of Chapters 23 Through 29 (Pages 147-84)

The events of the closing chapters of the novel reveal Karana's close kinship with the animal world, the death of Rontu and subsequent addition of his son to Karana's family, and the devastation caused by the tidal waves and earthquakes. It is in this section, also, that Karana bares her mixed feelings to us when the white man's ship first returns and then later takes her from the island on which she has lived alone for the past eighteen years.

1. Cause-and-Effect Relationship

Results of the Aleuts' visit to the "Island of the Blue Dolphins" were felt by Karana even after their departure. Have children think of some instances to prove this. (1. She was low on supplies for the winter--especially abalone for food and the fish she dried to provide winter light; 2. Karana found the wounded sea otter whom she befriended and later named Mon-a-nee; 3. Her thoughts were often on Tutok and the happy times they had had together, especially when she wore her cormorant dress and necklace.)

2. The Growing Animal Family

The delightful account of Karana's growing animal family (see Chapter 24 in particular) is so appealing that children should be given the opportunity to tell about each member of the family (Rontu, the birds Taino and Lurai and their two fledglings, the young gull which had fallen from its nest, Mon-a-nee and her two baby otters, and the red fox who had been caught in a snare), how it was acquired, and some of the interesting activities of this group.

Ask the children to explain the comparison Karana drew between her family and the one her sister Ulape must have had by that time. Have them locate examples of the humorous antics of the animals (the birds swooping down to pluck hairs from Rontu's back for their nests, the sea otters' habit of pounding the abalone shells open by beating them against their breasts with a stone, etc.).

Why was Rontu's death such a traumatic experience for Karana, in terms of the many years they had been such close companions? Why did she then feel compelled to capture his son (Rontu-Aru) and add him to the family?

The events of the summer during which she befriended many of her animal family led Karana to decide that she would never kill another animal, even to obtain material for clothing, building, or tools. Have children examine her reasoning on page 156 which brought about this decision, especially as exemplified in this passage:

> . . . this is the way I felt about the animals who had become my friends and those who were not, but in time could be . . . for animals and birds are like people, too, though they do not talk the same or do the same things. Without them the earth would be an unhappy place.

3. An Indication of Passing Time

The length of time Karana spent on the island by herself (eighteen years) may not be appreciated by the children if they are not asked to note some of the ways in which the author indicates the passing of time. They can find examples of this in such brief hints as "for many summers after the Aleuts left" (page 157) and in lengthier explanations such as this one on 158:

> Until that summer, I had kept count of all the moons since the time my brother and I were alone upon the island. For each one that came and went I cut a mark in a pole beside the door of my house. There were many marks, from the roof to the floor. But after that summer I did not cut them any more. The passing of the moons now had come to mean little, and I only made marks to count the four seasons of the year. The last year I did not count these.

How does "the last year" in the previous quotation foreshadow the end of the novel?

4. The Author's Use of Figurative Language and Sensory Impressions

Throughout the study of this novel, children will have been aided in appreciating the author's skill in use of language, especially from the standpoint of figures of speech, precise choice of words, and phrases and passages setting forth strong sensory impressions.

The description of the tidal waves and earthquakes hitting the island (Chapter 28) contains a wealth of such rich language, and children should be given the opportunity to share some of those which they consider the most

vivid and interesting. Only a few examples are given here:

> The air was so heavy that it was hard to breathe and the sun so hot that the sea was like a sun itself, too bright to look at. (page 165)

> The air was suddenly tight around me. There was a faint sound as if some giant animal were sucking the air in and in through its teeth. The rumbling came closer out of an empty sky, filling my ears. (page 166)

> Like two giants they [the tidal waves] crashed against each other. They rose high in the air, bending first one way and then the other. There was a roar as if great spears were breaking in battle and in the red light of the sun the spray that flew around them looked like blood. (page 168)

> The wave struck the cliff. It sent long tongues streaming around me so that I could neither see nor hear. The tongues of water licked into all the crevices, dragged at my hands and at my bare feet gripping the ledge. (page 168)

> The sea made no sounds on the shore. The gulls were quiet. The earth seemed to be holding its breath, as though it were waiting for something terrible to happen. (page 169)

5. <u>The Ending of the Story</u>

A careful examination should be made of Karana's feeling at the end of the story when the white man's ship first reappears. What caused her indecision as to whether she should hide or not? Why did she put on all her finery and yet not reveal her presence to the white man who called? Have children analyze this statement on page 175:

> I thought of many things, but stronger was the wish to be where people lived, to hear their voices and their laughter.

Then ask what her feeling must have been when she ran down to the beach, only to see the white man's ship sailing away. What must her thoughts and feelings have been during the two-year interval before the ship returned to take her from the island?

Karana described the man who first approached her in this manner: "The man in the gray robe had a string of beads around his neck and at the end of it was an ornament of polished wood. He raised his hand and made a motion toward me which was the shape of the ornament he wore." From this description found on page 178, can the children identify the man as a priest, or padre?

The last glimpse given us of Karana is of her standing on the ship watching her "Island of the Blue Dolphins" disappear. Her thoughts are of the many things she was leaving behind and of "all the happy days" she had spent there. What important point does this emphasize to the reader? (That she did not begrudge the fate which had left her alone on the island for the previous

eighteen years but had found it a happy and satisfying experience.) Why did it seem appropriate for the dolphins to rise out of the sea and swim before the ship for many leagues that morning?

Have the group discuss whether this ending was an appropriate and effective one for the novel. What other ending could have been used? What would have been the effect on the story if it had continued to tell of Karana's arrival in California?

SEVENTH CIRCLE MEETING

Discussion of the Novel as a Whole

After finishing the Island of the Blue Dolphins and discussing its separate parts, time should be allotted to look at the novel as a whole. The discussion should be generally tied in with an overview of the book, relating the parts to the whole, comparing the novel with other novels and with actual experiences, and seeing how well the purposes set forth for reading were met.

1. What seemed to be the main theme of this story? (An affirmation of the indomitableness of the human spirit as demonstrated through the courage, self-reliance, and acceptance of fate which enabled an Indian girl to survive against great odds and to transform what might have been a terrible ordeal into an uplifting experience.)

2. Is it possible to compare experiences which children have today with those faced by Karana? (Encourage personal experiences and contrasts.)

3. Can Karana's experiences be compared with those of others faced with survival, both in fact and fiction? (Children can think of other stories they may know, such as Robinson Crusoe, Swiss Family Robinson, and Call It Courage. They may also recall stories they have heard concerning survival after such experiences as airplane crashes, shipwrecks, and becoming lost in the mountains.)

4. What was the most exciting part of the book? the saddest? the most humorous? the most suspenseful? the strangest? the happiest? the most peaceful? (Be sure reasons are given to support each answer.)

5. What seemed to be the most difficult task which Karana faced? Why?

6. In what way did the author weave together the elements of fact and fiction in this story? (The Author's Note, pages 182-84, may help children decide.) Which parts of the book were probably fact? Which were invented by the author for the purpose of telling his story? What type of research did Mr. O'Dell probably need to do before he could write Island of the Blue Dolphins?

7. What effect did writing in the first person have on this story? Would it have been as interesting if another person had been telling Karana's story? How might the story have been written differently if this had been true?

8. How does this book have appeal to both boys and girls? How might the story have been different if it had been a boy who had been isolated on the island rather than a girl?

9. Do you think the title Island of the Blue Dolphins was a good one for this story? Why or why not? What other titles might have been used?

10. Can you suggest some experiences which might have happened to Karana after she left her island? What might these be?

11. What are some of the elements which go into the making of a good novel? To what extent are they present in Island of the Blue Dolphins?

12. What are some of the writing techniques demonstrated in this novel and how are they important?

13. What do you think were the qualities in Island of the Blue Dolphins which made it the recipient of the Newberry Award for the outstanding book of the year?